

may be being misled, and they cite for proof of that that action such as the Israelis continuing to establish settlements—that people may be telling the Secretary one thing but either unable to deliver or actually not telling the truth about their intentions.

The President. As we know, these differences have gone on for a long, long time. And I don't think that's the case, that somebody's saying one thing and then going off and just doing something behind his back. But, no, it's complex. But I don't accept that criticism. There's plenty of room to critique this and to wish for more progress from one country or another. But there's a lot going on. And I want to stay involved myself. I want to be a part of this because I think we have an opportunity now. And I think countries that the United States have helped recognize that. And I think Israel understands that. I think the Saudis understand that. I think the Egyptians understand

that. And so, I want to use that good will to further peace in the Middle East. And so I'm—put it this way—moderately optimistic.

Thank you all very much.

Note: President Bush's 81st news conference began at 8:35 a.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House. In the news conference, the following persons were referred to: Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs; President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union; John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff to the President; former President Jimmy Carter; Gary Sick, former National Security Council official during the Carter administration; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar de la Guerra; Secretary of State James A. Baker III; and Soviet Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on President Bush's Meeting With President Vytautas Landsbergis of Lithuania and Prime Ministers Ivars Godmanis of Latvia and Edgar Savisaar of Estonia May 8, 1991

The President met today with President Landsbergis of Lithuania, Prime Minister Godmanis of Latvia, and Prime Minister Savisaar of Estonia for about 40 minutes in the Cabinet Room. The three Baltic leaders, who are on a private visit to the United States, had requested the meeting, the President's sixth with Baltic officials during the past 12 months.

The President reiterated the longstanding U.S. policy of nonrecognition of the forcible incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union in 1940. The President noted the United States had transported emergency medical assistance to the Baltic States in February. The United States intends to

send additional shipments of medical supplies to the Baltic States and to continue its program of medical assistance in the Soviet Union itself.

The President said the United States was encouraged by the resumption of negotiations between the Soviet Government and the Baltic States. The United States believes that fair and constructive negotiations are the only way to resolve the complex problems between Moscow and the Baltic governments. He said the United States hoped that all parties to these negotiations could be flexible and pragmatic in order to reach a just and lasting resolution of the problem.